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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SP](#) [PSOE](#)

SUBJECT: SPANISH EU ELECTIONS: SOUR VICTORY, SWEET DEFEAT

Classified By: Kathleen Fitzpatrick, Political Counselor, for Reasons 1  
.4 (b) and (d)

1. (U) The Socialist Party (PSOE) won Spain's EU Parliamentary elections on June 13, but by a smaller margin than expected, 43% to 41%. The two-point difference offers something positive to both major parties, though the Popular Party probably comes away with the moral victory. The Socialists will have 25 seats and the Popular Party 23. Minor parties will have a total of 6 seats.

2. (SBU) The Socialists will use even this narrow win to reaffirm their victory in the March 14 general elections and to try to demonstrate that their capture of the government was not just a result of the March 11 terrorist attacks in Madrid. Socialists also see a positive sign in that they won despite a record low voter turnout (which at 46% was the lowest voter participation in any election since the restoration of democracy in Spain in 1977, hindered yesterday as elections took place on a glorious Spring day and just after Spain's victory over Russia in the Euro Cup soccer game the night before) and marked the first time the Socialists have won an election that had less than 55% participation. Though not the ringing endorsement the PSOE had hoped for a few weeks ago, they definitely welcome the win.

3. (SBU) The Popular Party sees the close loss as a sign that their party is on the way back and that they have weathered the fallout from the Aznar government's support for the Iraq war. Polls released before the election had forecast the Socialists winning by 6 to 9 percent, building upon the PSOE's 5-point win in the general elections. The Popular Party succeeded in reversing the trend and shaved the Socialist margin by more than half. The hope among the Popular Party is that this is proof that the Iraq issue is on its last legs, and that once the political focus returns to issues such as the economy, terrorism and the growing nationalist movements, the Popular Party is well poised to regain power.

4. (C) Comment: With this election behind them, the ruling Socialists have the opportunity to get out of campaign mode, which was heavy on anti-U.S. policy rhetoric. Since coming into power, the Socialists have been trying to contrast themselves from what they describe as the overly pro-U.S. policies of the Aznar government. This anti-U.S. bent even affected such issues as Spain's representation at the funeral services for President Reagan. A contact at MFA told us that the government had to send the President of the Senate, Javier Rojo, "kicking and screaming" as Spain's representative because none of the higher-ranking Socialist officials in the Zapatero government wanted to attend.  
MANZANARES